Mr. Zangwill Experiments With a "Bland" Novel

By N. P. D.

IN a graceful dedicatory letter, Mr. Zangwill lets it be known that *Jinny the Carrier* is in response to a request for a "bland" novel, by bland meaning something "to be read in bed with a sore throat." Dr. Johnson's definition of a novel is also quoted by Mr. Zangwill in excuse or explanation of his own, as "a story mainly about love." The Johnson definition, as we recall it, is "a smooth tale generally of love." But by whatever definition, smooth or bland, *Jinny the Carrier* is beyond all doubt a novel; Some Novel, it could even be said, since it is 607 pages long. Dr. Zangwill must have contemplated a sore throat with possible serious complications leading to a long illness and even longer convalescence. The story could be recommended even to a person in consumption, if the disease were the slow and not the galloping kind.

Jinny the Carrier is a story of rural England in Essex more than half a century ago in the leisurely days of the late dear Queen. In drawing his story out so long, Mr. Zangwill says he is only endeavoring to suggest the spirit and the speech of his Essex scenes and types. In his "epistle dedicatory," he writes: "Even the slowness and minuteness of my method—imposed as it is by the attempt to seize the essence of Essex—are immeasurable velocity and breadth compared with the scale of reality."

But if it takes 607 pages to seize the essence of one year of Essex, it may be wondered how many pages and volumes might have been justified in case Mr. Zangwill had chosen to make his story cover a longer period. Everything is expected to be speeded up a little in a novel, as on the movie screen, to give the semblance of reality. But Mr. Zangwill has preferred to describe a tilt cart day in a tilt cart way. Perhaps the effectiveness of his method could only be fairly tested in bed with a sore throat.

It has often been wondered why the rural post, so exasperating in reality, is always so amusing in fiction. The fact remains. One of the stock comedy characters of the stage or fiction is the country postmaster, or preferably mistress. Mr. Zangwill's opening chapter describing *Bundock on His Beat* (Jinny's rival), with a letter, which might as well have been a bomb, for Frog Farm—where he gets stuck in the bog, thereby defiling the Queen's breeches—is one of the most amusing chapters in the book. The Flynts, old Caleb and Martha, have been a little wary of letters since the letter had arrived from their son, Daniel, some years before announcing his marriage to the coffee-colored Kaffir lady; moreover they cannot read. The letter brought by Bundock (and read by Jinny) is from their son, Will, presumably from Australia, although with so many sons scattered over the globe they cannot be too sure:

"Caleb scratched his head. 'Now, which would be Will?'

"'Will was the freckled, good looking one,' said Jinny.

"'Oh, Jinny,' said Martha. 'They were all good looking—after Flynt. Dear heart, you can't ha' forgotten our tot after all that flurry. 'Tis only seven or eight years since he——'

"'Ay, ay,' cried Caleb. 'Him that mowed the cat's whiskers.'

"'No, dear heart, that was Ben.'

"'To be sure. Ben's the barber in New York—or some such place.'

"No, Caleb, that's Isaac.'

"'Isaac? Then Will 'ud be the one what married the coffee colored lady.'

"'I told you the other day that was Christopher.'

"'Ay, him in Australia.'

"'Africa, surely,' put in Elijah.

"'They furrin places be much of a muchness,' said Caleb. 'And my buoy-oys were as like as a baker's dozen.'

"There were girls in the batch,' corrected Martha."

The "generally of love" part of this bland story relates to Jinny and the Flynts' son Will, whose course of true love—further proving *Jinny the Carrier* a regular novel—runs none too smoothly for 600 pages before it ends happily ever afterward. Jinny might almost be called a feminist by inheritance, rather than convictions. She succeeds naturally to the carrier business of her gran'fer, old Daniel Quarles, whose tilt cart, having long been her nursery and school, in good time becomes her place of business. But Jinny has absorbed some of the independence going with her position, while Will has the "proper male" pride. On page 575 we read:

"But what comedies and tragedies had intervened between the two box-carryings, all sprung from the same obstinacy! And yet, she felt, she did not love him the less for his manly assertiveness: how sweet would be the surrender when their sparring was over and her will could be legitimately embraced in his, held like herself in those masterful, muscular arms."

So all's well that ends well, even if it takes as unconscionably long a time in doing it as the French king took in dying, and the reader himself is left gasping. But as Stevenson said of a man who could not profitably fill his time while waiting for a train that he must be dull, so it will be perhaps with the reader who will not be able to find much to entertain him while pursuing the leisurely course of Mr. Zangwill's story. There are the Christadelphians, for example, who bobbed up in the great war as conscientious objectors; and also the "Peculiars," who would substitute for medicine the more economical prayer, and are not even floored by the pertinent query: "If the Almighty meant prayer to be medicine, why did he create castor oil?" There is also mention at least of the "Jumpers" in the story, and it would have been interesting to have heard more about them.

Mr. Zangwill has, according to his own confession, lavishly attempted to put twenty years of Essex experience into a single story, instead of spreading it out in a whole series of novels as Mr. Phillpotts would do. The result is a corpulency and opulency not usually associated with the author of *The Children of the Ghetto*, but which is perhaps an even greater test of his capabilities as a writer. Most of his admirers, however, would probably not exchange his single sketch of the dying Heine for this long novel.

JINNY THE CARRIER. By Israel Zangwill. The Macmillan Company.

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The Book Monthly

MAJOR GEORGE HAVEN PUTNAM, the famous American publisher, has just paid his annual summer visit to London, where he has troops of friends. He knew Theodore Roosevelt very well, for he knew him half a century, and he has been speaking about him as a reader. Sagas were Roosevelt's favourite reading, and he preferred them even to the Greek classics, of which, however, he was very fond. He was an insatiable reader, but his reading was not to be described as omnivorous. He had a keen appreciation of the value of time, and he was careful in the selection of the material to which he would give eyesight and hours. He read in the train, he read while he was waiting to sleep, and he read while he was waiting for breakfast. He once told Major Putnam that he kept a book on the table, at the front door of his house, so he could read while he was waiting for Mrs. Roosevelt. "She is really a prompt woman," he said nicely, "but there have been minutes of waiting, and those minutes I have found useful."

IT may not be generally known that Roosevelt was once a publisher—anyhow, that he was once in a publisher's office. He came into the Putnam office and, says Major Putnam, "I was expected to make a business man of Theodore. He was in the office in the character of what the law calls a 'silent partner,' but can we think of Roosevelt being silent in any association?" No. He established a desk in the Putnam office, and from there carried on his already large correspondence on public affairs. "He showed me, from day to day," says Major Putnam naïvely, "how to run a publishing business, and brought many suggestions for schemes and undertakings. The suggestions had to be sat upon, as would be the case with the plans of any youngster beginning work in a publishing office, unless the publishing business is to be ruined." However, Major Putnam became very fond of Roosevelt, and Roosevelt became very fond of Putnam, and before death divided them, they had a long affectionate meeting.

ORIGINAL letters by English celebrities often come into the market, but they are not always so readable as those which David Garrick wrote. He has a good deal to say, in some recently sold, about his wife, whom he refers to as "charmer" and "tyrant." His usual reference, however, to her is the single word "she," which he always underlines, mean-

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T. R. as a Publisher

"Why We Fought"

THERE is a type of mind that frequently refuses to focus correctly when subjected immediately to a given set of conditions; it is such a type of mind as this that is exhibited in Capt. Chamberlain's little book of speeches, *Why We Fought*. We are dealing here with a proposition utterly different from the ordinary one of Peace League propaganda; we are dealing with an expression of sentiment which purports to be representative of one source of American public opinion—the army. We have to do with the opinions of a man who has been an eye witness and a participant in the war just ended and who now proclaims that there is only one way to attain a permanent world peace and that is by the establishment of a League of Nations.

Capt. Chamberlain sees nothing in the entire four years of unrelenting struggle but a tremendous tragedy, a sort of world cataclysm where a relatively small quota of heroism is swallowed up. He concludes that since it is the object of the Allies to effect a permanent peace the obvious instrument of accomplishing this is a League of Nations. And he bases his entire argument for the establishment of the league on the fact that it is uppermost in the thoughts of every one of our returned soldiers.

One of the most frequently reiterated arguments of the book is that "the fundamental covenant made by members of the league is to permit delay for arbitration or inquiry prior to the outbreak of hostilities . . . If the covenant of Paris contained one provision, and one provision alone, and that a provision introducing the element of delay prior to the outbreak of hostilities, it would represent a great step in advance." Capt. Chamberlain illustrates the importance of this delay by "the experience of the Irishman who found that the resolution to count ten before striking the first blow kept him out of trouble." He does not suggest, however, what the experience of the Irishman would be if he should contract the habit of counting ten after he had received the first blow. The author takes great pains to explain the advantages accruing to delay in opening hostilities, yet he fails to take into consideration the possibility of the aggressor's making his appearance on the scene while the council is comfortably seated in consultation. And as far as the great disadvantage caused by the difficulty of getting an allied army into the field in the same period of time possible for a single powerfully organized power the author has no comment to make.

WHY WE FOUGHT. By Thomas G. Chamberlain. Foreword by William Howard Taft. The Macmillan Company.

OUR Jimmie picked up on a second hand counter *A History of English Literature in a Series of Biographical Sketches*, by William Francis Collier (London. 1890), and turned the pages, finding such chapter headings as *Sir Thomas More, Born 1480 A. D., Beheaded 1535 A. D.; William Tyndale, Born About 1477 A. D., Strangled 1536 A. D.; Thomas Cranmer, Born 1489 A. D., Burned 1555 A. D.*, and others as fateful. And then, thoughtfully, fingering a book he has read lately, he asked: "Say, Boss, when was the death penalty for authors abolished, anyway?"

DODD, MEAD & CO. will publish Admiral von Tirpitz's memoirs, for which $100,000 was asked when it was offered here. He calumniates the Kaiser.

THE Macmillan Company has assembled a dairyman's library, and that is all right, of course, but its *Manual of American Grape Growing* can only excite futile sorrow.